## THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

The most agreeable and instructive evenings spent at the Institute, are those when, two or three short *suggestive* papers being read, the members are led into conversation and discussion. This was the case on Monday evening last. Mr. Kendall was in the chair, and the meeting was numerous. Amongst the donations was a check for 20*l.* from General Pasley, for the purposes of the Institute. We trust the council will immediately apply it to the improvement of the library, to which, by the way, their attention ought constantly to be directed. A good architectural library, easily accessible, is much required, and if formed by the Institute, will be found a sheet anchor on which to depend hereafter, should the wind at any time be less favourable than it is now.

The foreign secretary announced that the council had voted the Institute medal to the Chevalier Beuth, lately the chief director of the Government works in Prussia, on his retirement from office. Mr. Poynter, hon. sec., read a catalogue drawn up by himself and Mr. Donaldson, of drawings by Palladio, now in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire, at Chiswick,—a very extraordinary collection, 250 in number, which is little known. Strange to say, although they are all by the master's own hand, not one is signed. The list was made in consequence of an application on the subject from Vicenza, where a life of Palladio is about to be published. The drawings, properly mounted, are in seventeen portfolios, and are preserved most carefully by the duke, who prizes them highly. They were probably collected by the great earl of Burlington. As we shall take an early opportunity to print the list entire, we shall say no more of it now than that the collection is of great curiosity, and includes some designs by Palladio never published. Mr. Donaldson remarked that the collection gave evidence rather of thought than of attention to good drawing; they were bold and slight, and those which were from ancient examples shewed that he entered thoroughly into the spirit and genius of the antique. Drawings of one of the temples represented colonnades that did not now exist. It was greatly to be regretted that they were not given to the world: this might be done inexpensively, and would be regarded with interest universally. Mr. Tite said enough was not done for the elucidation of classic architecture. Even of St. Paul's Cathedral, there were no sufficient illustrations. In connection with the Duke of Devonshire's collection, the speaker alluded to Inigo Jones' sketch-book, in the duke's possession, of which he had caused to be made a small number of fac-simile copies for friends and public libraries. Some specimens of Dr. Arnott's valves were exhibited and described: and led to a conversation on smoky chimneys, which shewed what very different opinions are entertained on apparently simple points.

The honorary secretary read a letter from Mr. Hawkins (on the proposed collection of national antiquities at the British Museum), given on the preceding page, and called on Mr. Newton, one of the officers of the Museum, who was in the room, to give further explanation. Mr. Newton said, the trustees of the Museum had always been most anxious to establish a Museum of National Antiquities, but had not felt themselves in a position to do so till now. It was most desirable that a spirit of preservation should be induced, and that relics, when found, should be transmitted to a public repository, rather than be placed in private hands.

Mr. Tite was glad of the opportunity which then offered itself, to set the public right on a particular point, in connection with antiquities in the city. A general impression prevailed, that matters of this sort were little cared for in the city, and that they looked after nothing but turtle and railway shares. In reality, however, this was not the case. There were many there who were most anxious to keep together such ancient remains as were found. These views were greatly interfered with by those gentlemen, who singly, were running after all the antiquities which were brought to light, and endeavoured to buy them. Such a course necessarily led to their dispersion. When they were excavating for the Exchange, foreseeing that many relics would probably be discovered, and most anxious that they should all be kept together, the contractor was bound, under heavy penalties, to place every thing that was discovered, in the hands of the committee, and arrangements were made to remove any temptation to sell on the part of the workmen. At the commencement of the works, he was applied to by Mr. Roach Smith, for leave to watch the excavation, and this he readily gave, but told him at the same time, that he would not be permitted on any account to purchase. In the first instance, nothing was discovered of earlier date than the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, but at the western end, in a part where the ground was bad, piles were found. These being drawn, a bed of concrete was discovered, and under it a hole filled with soft peaty earth. In this was an extraordinary collection of Roman remains,—remnants of Roman London; shoes, sandals, amphoræ, bodkins, and numerous coins; such a collection as was never seen before. It required the greatest efforts to prevent it from being dissipated, and Mr. Roach Smith had given much trouble by his efforts to elude the regulations, and purchase for his own collection. What he had to complain of, however, was, that Mr. S. had afterwards accused them in the *Archæologia*, and elsewhere, of the interruption they caused to his investigations. The charge had been made publicly, and he therefore felt no delicacy in mentioning the name. The collection, he was happy to say, was under his care in the London Institution; and the only question was, whether it should be placed in the City Library or the British Museum; in one way or the other, it would speedily be made public.

Mr. G. Godwin, reverting to Mr. Hawkins' gratifying communication, reminded the meeting of an application made to the Museum some time ago, to the effect that they should establish a Museum of Architecture, which was refused, and further pointed to the manner in which Mr. Wyse's motion in the House of Commons, to the same effect, had been received.* He hailed with great satisfaction the present determination of the trustees, and feeling that they would probably be glad to have their hands strengthened, by an expression of opinion from a body like the Institute, suggested that the council should take into consideration how they could best convey this,—a suggestion which appeared to be concurred in by the whole meeting.

Mr. Donaldson alluded to what the French had done for the preservation of antiquities. He was of opinion it was not desirable to bring all remains that were discovered, to London, but that separate provincial museums should be established. He alluded to the good which had been done by Mr. Britton's works (as Mr. Tite had remarked previously), and praised him for his continued efforts to induce the preservation of monuments.

Mr. Britton said it gave him sincere gratification to hear what the trustees of the British Museum were about to do. He had advocated the establishment of such a museum as far back as 1800; when he advised Sir Richard Colt Hoare to deposit his wonderful collection in the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries. He brought the matter before the society at that time, but they shewed no desire to interfere, and the matter dropped. When Waltham Cross, and other national antiquities, were about to be destroyed, he renewed the question, but both the British Museum and the Society of Antiquaries were careless. Now that the former was about to stir in it, the provinces would doubtless follow the example. At Bath a great deal had been discovered, but more had been destroyed. Architectural remains were of the utmost importance to British History; the rectification of which, depended more on antiquarian relics than written records. Hoare's museum was now kept in a small apartment, with little attention; and there was a probability, that before many years elapsed it might be distributed. In conclusion, he said it was gratifying to him to find, that he should probably yet see a museum of national antiquities, before he passed off the scene.

---

Penrith Castle.—A number of workmen are at present engaged in excavating and levelling the castle garth, near the ruins of Penrith Castle, which is the intended site of a railway station at that place.

* See page 313 *ante*.

## DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY.

On Nov. 11th a conversazione was held. Theme—The style of Louis 14th. Mr. Fildes, V. P., described the rise of the *renaissance* style in France, and its progress from the time of Francis 1st, and its gradual modifications, resulting in the establishment of that of Louis 14th, adding a brief account of many celebrated artists and architects, who flourished under the munificent patronage of the court during the long reign of that monarch.

Numerous engravings were exhibited from the works of Le Brun, Watteau, the Le Pautres, Berain, Mariette, Johnson, Chippendale and others, to which constant reference was made in illustration of the observations which followed. There were also produced some copies by Mr. Seddon, of original sketches for the decorations at Versailles, now preserved in the Bibliotheque at Paris. It was remarked, that erroneous conceptions of the style are very prevalent in the minds of many employed upon decorations, and that the more sumptuous and magnificent works of the period are neglected or imperfectly understood, whilst their place is usurped by the exuberance of fantastic scroll work, which appeared only at the latter end of this reign, and was prevalent during those of Louis 15th and 16th, but which has in common estimation been considered as the geniune productions of Louis Quatorze style.

The general characteristics of the style in its best period were described as "Florid Roman," and the interior decorations as being, in design, subordinate to the principal architectural lines. The works of Mansart, Le Brun, and Jean Le Pautres, were referred to as examples. It was observed that the productions of Watteau, Berain, Mariette and Dekker, displayed the lighter grotesque fancies in ornament, which attended a departure from classic taste, and also that the facility with which eastern forms of ornament were blended with them had served to sustain them in the public estimation. It was said that Sir C. Wren made the nearest approach to the style of Louis 14th recognizable in the architecture of this country, and that the decorations of some rooms in Wilton House, Stafford House, and a few others were in accordance with this style. After some observations upon tapestried and mirrored panels, and the adulatory heroic ceilings, by Le Brun, peculiar to the royal palaces of France at that period, the meeting was adjourned to Nov. 26th.

## COMPLAINT AGAINST A DISTRICT SURVEYOR.

Sir,—With the difficulties created by the variety of unintelligible clauses of the "Metropolitan Buildings Act," it is to be regretted that the appointed officers, either through ignorance or caprice, should increase the vexation of those who are compelled to submit to its enactments. A case that has caused much excitement in this neighbourhood has recently come under my notice, the particulars of which I will endeavour to state as concisely as the ramifications of the matter will permit.

A party had commenced four fourth-rate houses before 1st January last, and regularly proceeded with them, nearly to completion, until 4th of August, when, to his great surprise, (without any *previous intimation* of objection) an official notice from the overseers of Camberwell was served upon him, requiring him, "within fourteen days next ensuing the date hereof, to pull down or cause to be pulled down four messuages, tenements, or dwelling-houses, lately erected by you, in Upper Queen-street, &c.; described in the report of William Crawford Stow, the district surveyor, as being in a ruinous and dangerous condition. A copy of which report, together with copies of the 40th and 112th sections of the said Act, are affixed thereto.

And we hereby further give you notice, that in the event of your *disobeying this notice*, the *powers* and provisions given to us by and contained in the said Act of Parliament will be strictly enforced."—Signed by the overseers.

The allegations in the report I will set out presently, with the statement of actual facts. The report of Mr. Stow concluded thus: "I do hereby, agreeably to the provisions of the above Act, certify my opinion, that the said party walls or party partitions, and the front walls of the

Learn about PDF Compression and OCR visit ThePaperlessOffice.org